

Claim 3 (amended):

The process according to claim 1, wherein in the lactamase enzyme is in the form of a cell paste or intact cells.

Claim 4 (amended):

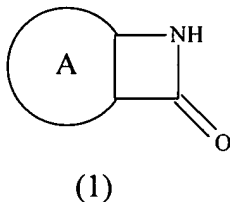
The process according to claim 1, which additionally comprises isolation of the enantiomerically enriched β -amino acid produced by hydrolysis.

Claim 5 (amended):

The process according to claim 4, wherein the isolated β -amino acid is then subjected to a condensation reaction to reform the β -lactam ring.

Claim 6 (amended):

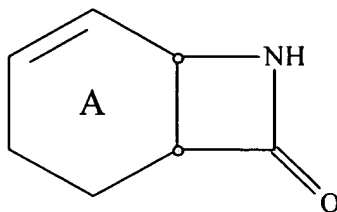
The process according to claim 1, wherein the lactam is a fused polycyclic compound of the type represented by formula (1)



wherein ring A is any monocyclic or any polycyclic ring, optionally substituted with one or more non-interfering groups.

Claim 7 (amended):

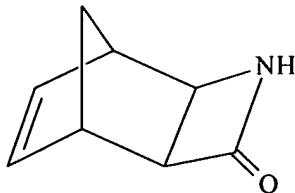
The process according to claim 6, wherein the lactam has the formula



wherein ring A is unsaturated and optionally also bridged or further fused.

Claim 8 (amended):

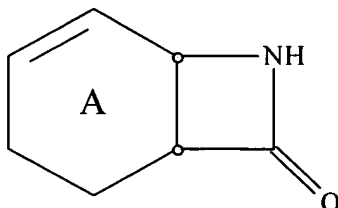
The process according to claim 7, wherein the lactam is 3-azatricyclo[4.2.1.0^{2,5}]non-7-en-4-one (2)



(2)

Claim 9 (amended):

The process according to claim 1, wherein the lactam is 7-azabicyclo[4.2.0]oct-4-en-8-one (3)



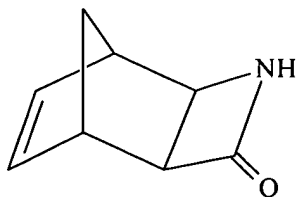
(3)

Claim 10 (amended):

The process according to claim 1, wherein the lactamase enzyme is obtainable from a microorganism having the characteristics of that available as the *Rhodococcus globerulus* strain identified as CMC103381, Accession No. NCIMB 41042.

Claim 11 (amended):

An enantiomerically enriched 3-azatricyclo[4.2.1.0^{2,5}]non-7-en-4-one of formula (2)



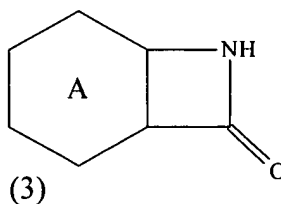
(2)

in an enantiomeric excess of at least 80%.

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Claim 12 (amended):

An enantiomerically enriched 7-azabicyclo[4.2.0]oct-4-en-8-one of formula (3)



in an enantiomeric excess of at least 80%.

Claim 13 (amended):

A lactam according to claim 11, wherein the enantiomeric excess is at least 95%.

Claim 14 (amended):

The enantiomerically enriched enantiomer according to claim 11 in the levorotatory form.

Please add the following new claims:

17. The lactam according to claim 12, wherein the enantiomeric excess is at least 95%.

A²

18. The enantiomerically enriched enantiomer according to claim 12, in the levorotatory form.